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ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

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January 7, 2004

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The Honorable George W. Bush
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

After three years in office, we are pleased that you are now joining us in our efforts to reform our immigration laws and bring both security and justice to our immigration system. We hope that your recent attention to addressing the many failings of our current immigration policy will lead to real and meaningful reforms, and not just political sound bites.

Toward this end, we would make several important suggestions. First, we would note our concerns with an approach that merely creates a quasi-permanent class of second class citizens in the form of temporary workers whose status is tied to their employer. While there is a place and need for a temporary worker program, ultimately we need to work towards a program which invests immigrants in the American dream by allowing them to obtain the full citizenship.

In addition, in our view, it is difficult to assert that one favors immigration reform, unless you are willing to take steps to respond to the many documented hardships and inequities resulting from the 1996 Immigration Act, or take steps to substantially reduce the unconscionable backlog – now exceeding six million applications – facing the Immigration and Naturalization Service. We sincerely hope that you are willing to tackle these issues as part of a comprehensive package.

Second, we would propose that you transmit to Congress within the next month, specific legislative proposals for reform. Only by putting your own specific proposal on the table will Congress and the American people be able to fully assess your ideas for immigration reform. Such a transmission would also help signify the importance of this initiative to you.

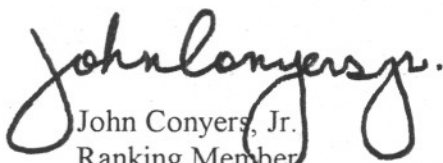
The Honorable George W. Bush
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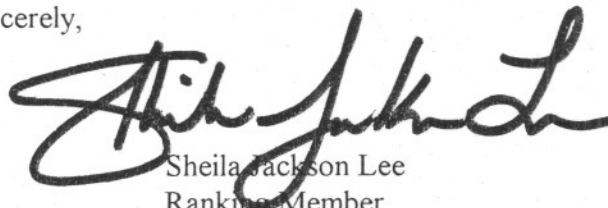
Third, we would encourage you consider advocating several balanced legislative approaches to immigration reform that are awaiting action by the Republican leadership. These bills include the Dream (Student Adjustment) Act (H.R. 1684); the "Agricultural Jobs Opportunity, Benefits, and Security Act of 2003" (H.R. 3142); and the Restoration of Fairness in Immigration Act of 2003 (H.R. 47). These bills are the result of extensive cooperation with advocacy groups from varying viewpoints and members from both sides of the aisle.

Finally, we would ask that you convene a meeting at your earliest possible convenience of the bipartisan congressional leadership as well as the appropriate members of the authorizing committees to discuss these matters and develop a plan for action. We believe that the imperative of such a meeting will help us coordinate actions and goals in the critical area of immigration reform.

We look forward to working with you to construct meaningful policy proposals that will address the needs of immigrants wishing to make a better life here in our country, while also protecting American workers who are struggling to maintain their quality of life.

Sincerely,


John Conyers, Jr.
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary


Sheila Jackson Lee
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Immigration,
Border Security and Claims

cc: Honorable F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr.
Chairman, House Judiciary Committee

David Hobbs,
Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs